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LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE THE

LORD CHANCELLOR,

CONCERNING

The Mode of SWEARING, by Laying the
Hand upon and Kissing the GOSPELS.

BY A PROTESTANT.

LUK. xii. 32. *What thing soever I command you, observe
to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*

ROM. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.*

"Frustra fit per plura, quod æque commode fieri
"potest per pauciora."

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LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE THE

ORD CHANCELLOR

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF

OXFORD

IN RESPONSE TO



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THE occasion of writing the subsequent Letter was as follows : One had been summoned to appear as an Evidence in a certain affair depending before the Court of Chancery, and required to swear by laying his hand upon and kissing the Gospels. The person intended to deliver it into the hand of the right honourable the Lord Chancellor, the next time he should be called to be an Evidence : but he having never been called again, it was not actually presented.

Yet, as it is known that several well-disposed persons, and some of his Majesty's best subjects, cannot in conscience give their Oath by laying the hand upon and kissing the Book; this being in their opinion, a mode of swearing both unscriptural and superstitious, a relic of Popish idolatry, and

an old Heathenish rite Christianized, by no better authority than that of the pretended Vicar at Rome. The publishing of it at this time was deemed necessary, to inform those who may labour under mistakes in this matter, that the scruples moved by many sober people against swearing by the Book, do not proceed from the least disaffection to his Majesty's person and government, or disregard of superiors, but purely from a principle of conscience, an awful regard to the name and authority of the great **GOD**, and such a view of the nature of an Oath, which is doubtless a very solemn part of religious worship, as the Word of **GOD**, the only rule of faith, worship, and obedience, directs to.



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MY LORD,

HAVING lately been called to appear as an Evidence in the affair of—, now depending before your Lordship and the Honourable Court of Chancery, and required to give Oath by laying my hand upon and kissing the Gospels; lest it should be thought that my refusing to swear in this manner flows from seditious and rebellious principles, or any disrespect to his Majesty's person and government, or to any of the Honourable Courts of Justice, held in his name and by his authority; I have presumed, with all due submission to your Lordship and the Honourable Court of Chancery, to lay before you some reasons, which do so bind my conscience, that I have no freedom to take an Oath dispensed in the manner aforesaid. And,

I. Though I am far from being of opinion with some, particularly Quakers, and a few other Sectaries, that it is in no case lawful to swear, though called to do so before a lawful Magistrate; and do not at all question your Lordship's authority, or the authority of any of the Honourable Magistrates whom his Majesty has intrusted with the administration of justice, to

require an Oath of me, or any other of his Majesty's subjects, for putting an end to strife in any matter of controversy between man and man: and though I am willing now, or at any time, when lawfully called, to take an Oath by lifting up the hand, which I take to be the scriptural mode of swearing; yet I have no freedom in my conscience to swear by kissing the Book: because, in my humble opinion, this method of swearing has nothing in the Word of God, either in Scripture-precept or example, to warrant it.

I presume it will not be denied, nor even disputed, that swearing by the Name of God is an act, yea a very solemn act, of religious worship: but no part of religious worship can be performed to God acceptably, that is not authorised by his Word; therefore I dare not act so far contrary to the light of my own conscience, as to practise or give countenance to any rite or ceremony, used in the worship of God, that does not bear upon it a stamp of his authority, as being instituted by him; either expressly prescribed by his command, or authorised by approved Scripture example, which being of an imitable and ordinary nature, is acknowledged by all sound Protestants to have the force of a general rule in matters of religion.

I am persuaded, that the most strenuous advocates for the Book-oath will not so much as pretend, that there is any Scripture-precept injoining, or any Scripture example authorising it; or indeed, that there is any one passage from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, that does in the least countenance the swearing of it: therefore the authority of our blessed Saviour, *by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice*, obliges me to avoid it, as I would not be guilty of taking the name of God in vain, when professing to worship him, and swear by his name: for, says our Lord, *In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*, Matth. xv. 9.

Further, it may be observed, that it is a Protestant principle, "That the acceptable way of worshipping God is taught by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."

This important truth has been abundantly confirmed, and improved with great success, by many eminent Protestant divines, in their disputes with Papists about the unwarrantableness of those vain, superstitious, and idolatrous ceremonies,

by which the Romish church has corrupted almost every part of the worship of God. And indeed, if this principle is once given up, namely, "That nothing is to be admitted in the worship of God that is not warranted by his Word;" nothing of weight can be offered to disprove the warrantableness, or shew the unlawfulness of that vast number of idle and superstitious rites introduced by Antichrist, which all true Protestants have ever looked upon, and testified against, as manifest corruptions of the worship of God.

Here we might add the words of a judicious gentleman *, that lately had the honour to be a judge in one of the highest courts of justice in this kingdom, who in some papers left by him, and published after his death, expresses himself in the following manner: "Many human inventions among Christians, which neither serve to glorify God, nor to edify men, are neither civil ceremonies nor contain any holiness in them; therefore they must be rejected as superstitious and profane. Nothing intended or done by men is an honour to God, but that which is in obedience unto some of his commandments.

* Justice Burnet. See Introduction to a small Tract published after his death, and intitled, *The True Church of Christ, which, and where to be found*, p. 7.

All ceremonies of religion that are an honour unto God, must be commanded by God himself; and they that attempt to bring such ceremonies into his worship as are no honour to him, mock him." A great deal more to the same purpose follows in the next page, but what has been already quoted may suffice as a specimen of that honourable author's sentiments in relation to this point.

II. From what has been already observed, it appears, That to swear by kissing the Book, instead of being warrantable, is really a piece of superstition * and will-worship, the very essence of which consists in pretending to honour and worship God, by rites, and ceremonies, actions, and usages of any kind, devised by men without any warrant from his Word. Thus we find the Apostle Paul condemning every thing of that nature under the notion of will-worship, *Coloss. ii. 23.*

When Jeroboam appointed a religious

* So called perhaps, as being *super statutum*, or, *super id quod injunctum est*. If kissing the Book is no part of religious worship, but only an unmeaning symbol unadvisedly introduced, and heedlessly used in swearing, it is mere trifling, and therefore very indecent in the worship of God. If it is accounted a significant ceremony, or an act of worship, it is plainly superstitious, being more than is required. Thus it is, in the most proper sense of the word, *will-worship*, every species of which is absolutely prohibited in Scripture.

feast to be celebrated in the eighth month at Bethel, like unto that which God had commanded to be observed at Jerusalem, though doubtless he pretended to honour God thereby, he is condemned, because he ordered it to be kept *in the month which he had devised of his own heart*, 1 Kings xii. 33. And the wicked practice of some in Israel, who *sacrificed in the high places of Baal, and burnt their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal*, is reprov'd chiefly on this account, that it was what God commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into his mind, Jer. xix. 5. Further, all worship that God hath not commanded, or authorised in his Word, is declared to be an *abomination*, Deut. xvii. 3, 4.

Lest it should be thought that what has been just now affirmed concerning the Book-oath, is only the result of some whimsical scruple, sectarian fancy, or novel opinion, it may be observed, that some of the most zealous confessors and martyrs for the truth in this kingdom, when bearing witness against antichristian errors and superstition, have expressed themselves in the very same manner concerning it. Thus Mr William Thorp, a divine of considerable note, and zealous confessor of the truth, in the reign of Henry IV. having been cited to appear before Thomas Arundel

del, then Archbishop of Canterbury, to purge himself of the crime of Heresy, that he had been falsely accused of by some of the Popish faction, and called to take an oath by laying his hand upon the Gospels, not only refused to do so, but testified against this mode of swearing in the following manner: "To swear upon a book is to swear by creatures, and this swearing is ever unlawful. This sentence witnesseth Chrysostom, blaming them greatly that bring forth a book to swear upon *."

We blame the Romanists, and justly too, for putting their unwritten traditions on a level with the Word of God; but have they not good reason to retort the charge, while we admit uninstituted ceremonies in the worship of God, and put them on the same footing with divine ordinances? If men once take the liberty to add their own inventions to divine institutions, it is hard to tell where they will stop: for if they are allowed to invent one or two ceremonies, to be used in the worship of God, they may as well invent two hundred, yea as many as they please.

III. Another thing that makes me scruple to swear by kissing the Book is, that I find it is one of the relics of Pagan and Popish idolatry, and therefore very unfit to be used

* Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, &c. vol. I. p. 538.

by Protestants, who profess to renounce every thing of that kind. One of the most solemn religious rites used by the ancient Pagans, in the worship of their idols, was their kissing them; hence Cicero informs us, that in Sicily the chin of one of their noted idols was worn bare with kissing*.

This Pagan rite was adopted by the ten tribes of Israel, that revolted from the house of David, in times of great degeneracy, and used by them in worshipping the golden calves that Jeroboam set up at Dan and Bethel: hence it is said, *Hof. xiii. 2. Let the men that sacrifice KISS the calves.* The same ceremony was used by them in worshipping Baal. Thus, *1 Kings xix. 18.* God says, *I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not KISSED him.*

This idolatrous rite the Romanists borrowed from the Pagans; and accordingly they use it in many parts of their worship, and in swearing, among the rest. Kissing the Book is by them called kissing the Gospels; the four Gospels having been chiefly used by them in swearing, because they foolishly and superstitiously imagined, that these are more sacred than other books of Scripture. Now for those who profess the Protestant religion to follow the example of

* Vide Orat. IX. in C. Verrem.

Heathens, and symbolize with Papists, in their superstitious kissings, to me appears contrary to that divine command given to Israel in a similar case, *Levit. xviii. 3, 4.*

After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. If after all we shall still continue to partake with mystical Babylon in her sins; have we not reason to expect, that we shall also share with her in her plagues?

IV. As kissing the Book in swearing, has been some way introduced among us as a part of religious worship, the Book must be considered either as the object to which that piece of worship is ultimately directed, or as a medium, or mean, by or through which that worship is directed to God. If the worship is ultimately referred to the Book as the object of it, when any kiss the Book in taking an oath, they worship the Book; and why may they not as well bow to it, and pray to it, as Papists do to their images?

If it should be alleged, that the Book is sacred, as it contains a revelation of the mind and will of God, and is fit to awe the minds of men, and strike them with

terror in case of false swearing, as it denounces most dreadful threatnings against those that are guilty of such a horrid crime: we answer, though all this should be granted, it cannot be said that the Book is God; and therefore to worship it must be gross idolatry: for the command of the great Jehovah is, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Mat. iv. 10.

If it should be affirmed, that the Book is not the Subject to which the worship that is performed in the act of swearing, or rather in the act of kissing, is ultimately directed, but only the mean thro' which it is directed unto God, the sole object of all religious worship and adoration; still the kissing of the Book must be reputed unlawful, because it is a worshipping of God in a way, or by means, not appointed in his own Word: yea, it is to worship God in and by a piece of matter for that only can be kissed; which is all that Papists pretend to do when they worship images. The Council of Trent itself appoints that images be had and retained in churches, not because it is believed that there is any divinity or virtue in them, for which they should be worshipped, but because the honour given to them is ascribed to that which they represent, that

by those images which we kiss we may adore Christ*.

Should it be pretended, that it is a matter of indifferency, whither we swear by kissing the Book, lifting up the right-hand, or putting the hand under the thigh; because we have in Scripture some instances of swearing by putting the hand under the thigh, as well as by lifting up the right-hand: we answer, it is evident from Scripture, that the ordinary mode of swearing was by lifting up the hand. Thus Abraham sware *by LIFTING UP THE HAND UNTO THE LORD, the most high GOD, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that he would not take from the King of Sodom so much as a thread or shoe-latchet*, Gen. xiv. 22, 23. And when God sware unto Israel, that he would bring them out of the land of Egypt; he is said to have *lifted up his hand* unto them, Ezek. xx. 5, 6. Accordingly in many places of Scripture, which we cannot now stay to enumerate, lifting up the hand is put for swearing. The man clothed in linen, of whom we read, *Dan. xii. 7.* is said to have *HELD UP HIS HAND* unto heaven, and sworn by Him that liveth for ever and ever. And Rev. x. 5, 6. *The Angel that stood upon the sea, and upon the earth,* is said to have *LIFTED UP his Hand*

* Acts of the Council of Trent, *Seff.* 25.

to heaven, and sworn by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time should be no longer. Upon which passage a judicious divine has this remark; “*Kissing the Book is Antichrist’s way of swearing; but lifting up the hand is Christ’s way of swearing*.*”

As to the mode of swearing, if it may be called so, by putting the hand under the thigh, as far as I remember we have only two instances of it in Scripture. One we have, *Gen. xxiv. 2, 3.* where Abraham, when he was about to make his servant swear that he would not take a wife unto his son of the daughters of the Canaanites, caused him to put his hand under his thigh. The other instance of this kind is recorded, *Gen. xlvii. 29.*; where we find that Jacob caused his son Joseph to put his hand under his thigh and swear unto him, that he would carry his body out of Egypt, and bury him with his fathers in their burying-place, in the land of Canaan. As to both these instances, it may be observed, that they were extraordinary; and that the ceremony of putting

* Mr BOSTON. His words are these: “The gesture used by him (Christ the Angel of the Covenant) in swearing, is not laying his hand upon, the Book, though he had one in his hand; that is Antichrist’s way of swearing: but it is lifting up the hand to heaven, *verse 5.* the natural and approved gesture in an oath, as being a solemn invoking of God who dwelleth there.” *Serm. &c. vol. II. p. 326.*

the hand under the thigh, was used for some reasons of a peculiar nature, which we have now nothing to do with. When Abraham ordered his servant, and Jacob caused his son, to put the hand under the thigh, in swearing to them, it seems to have been a solemn indication, or expression, of their faith in the Messiah, who was to come out of their loins; and intended to remind them of the importance of the matter about which they were called to swear, as having some special respect to the performance of the promise concerning Him. And it is the opinion of some, that swearing in this manner on these extraordinary occasions was, in effect, a swearing by God to be incarnate.

In fine, as this mode of swearing, namely, by putting the hand under the thigh, must be confessed by all to have been extraordinary, it is evident that it is not to be imitated by us now under the New Testament dispensation; and therefore no Christians, that we know of, even pretend to make it a precedent, or to imitate it by swearing in that manner. But swearing by lifting up the hand towards heaven, in the way of making a solemn appeal to God, the righteous Judge of all, we find to have been ordinary both under the Old and New Testament dispensation.

V. Another thing that adds to my scruples, with regard to the mode of swearing by kissing the Book, is, that it seems to take off a great deal from the solemnity requisite in swearing an oath, which is an appeal to the divine Majesty, and as it were a calling upon him to witness our sincerity; and at the same time implies an acknowledgment of his power and justice to punish us if we swear falsely. Hence there are not a few who take a liberty to trifle in the matter of swearing; yea to swear falsely, or at least rashly and inconsiderately; as there is scarce any thing in what is called the Oath itself, or in the manner of administering it, that has a tendency to awe the conscience; or lead the swearer to form just apprehensions of the nature of an oath, or to remind him of the danger of swearing falsely.

I have been credibly informed, that some conscious of their having prevaricated and dissembled, when called to swear in this manner, have endeavoured to justify themselves, or at least to extenuate their sin, by alledging that they did not swear but only kissed the Book; thus making it evident, that they looked upon that ceremony as a matter of small moment. I have been told also, that some who have professed a readi-

ness to swear by kissing the Book, have refused to swear by lifting up the right-hand, not daring to invoke the Majesty of heaven, in that solemn manner, to witness a falsehood ; or to incur the horrid guilt of perjury, when particularly reminded of their future appearance before God's awful tribunal, as they are when an oath is administered to them in the Scriptural manner. But, however men may endeavour to blind their own consciences, I think those who kiss the Book, when called to swear before a magistrate, are no less bound to declare the truth, and nothing but the truth ; and are chargeable with no less guilt when they do otherwise, than if they swore by making a direct and solemn appeal to the Divine Majesty, by lifting up the hand to heaven ; as kissing the Book is put in the room of an oath, and therefore must be looked upon as equally binding the consciences of those who use this ceremony ; yet I dare not give countenance, or the least encouragement, to a practice that, in my humble opinion, hath a manifest tendency to draw the ignorant and inconsiderate into a snare, and harden the wicked in sin.

VI. Finally, what has considerable weight with me in this matter is, that upon examination I find, that kissing the Book

is really no oath at all ; because when an oath, as it is called, is administred in this manner, there is no appeal to God the righteous Judge and Searcher of hearts, which I apprehend is necessary and essential to an oath ; neither is the least mention made of his name, if it is not in the short prayer commonly subjoined to the form of words that is ordinarily used on that occasion, “ So help you God : ” which doubtless is no part of the oath itself, but may with reverence be used by persons when engaging in any piece of lawful business, as well as in swearing.

Now to pretend to take an oath, without making any appeal to God, or so much as mentioning his name, to me appears to be contrary to that divine and express precept which we have, *Deut. vi. 13. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God—and shalt swear by his name.* How can we be said to swear by his name, when we do not so much as mention his name in taking an Oath ; and when there is no appeal to Him, nor the least acknowledgment of Him, but what is supposed to be included in that unwarrantable and unintelligible ceremony of killing the Book, and in the short prayer formerly mentioned, which, as has been already observed, is no part of the oath ?

These, with several others of a like na-

ture that might be mentioned, are the reasons that bind my conscience in this matter, so that I dare not swear in the manner prescribed; though, as I formerly declared, I am willing to take an oath before your Lordship, or any other lawful magistrate, in the manner the Word of God directs to, namely, by lifting up the right-hand, and making an appeal to the righteous Judge of all the earth with regard to the affair now under consideration, either now or afterward, as your Lordship and the honourable Court of Chancery may require it.

I am sorry that I should find myself obliged to decline yielding obedience to the superior powers in any case; but as I apprehend that the mode of swearing commonly practised in this kingdom is contrary to the divine command, I hope your Lordship will excuse me in this matter. And I am inclined to think, that such a wise and virtuous king, as is his present Majesty, King George the third, under whose mild and auspicious government we enjoy so much liberty and so many valuable privileges, would not desire the meanest of his subjects to comply with any rite or custom, or submit to any injunctions or laws of men, that they apprehend are inconsistent with the Word of God, who only is Lord of the con-

science: and I know your Lordship will not dispute the truth of the apostolic maxim, That when at any time the command of God and the injunctions of men clash with one another, it is safest, yea our indispensable duty, to obey God rather than men.

I hope no threatnings of prosecution, with which some have endeavoured to intimidate me, shall ever have such weight as to make me act contrary to the Word of God, and the light of my own conscience in this affair, while I am enabled to consider that God is greater than man; that the hand of God is inconceivably heavier than the hand of man; and that the utmost punishment that man can inflict, is no way comparable to the wrath of an Almighty, and sin-revenging God.

That God may long preserve his Majesty's august person, and prosper his government; and that he may direct your Lordship, and other honourable Judges, commissioned by his Majesty, to administer public justice, to such measures, on every occasion, as may be most for the glory of God, and the welfare of his Majesty's subjects, so that in the end you may give an account of your stewardship, to the great Lord and righteous Judge of all the earth, before whose tremendous tribu-

nal we must all shortly appear, with joy and not with grief, is the earnest desire and hearty prayer of,

His MAJESTY's loyal Subject,

and your Lordship's most

obedient humble Servant, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

IT is said, that some persons of distinction in the city of London, are great sticklers for the Book-oath. I have been credibly informed, that a reputable tradesman, after expending upwards of thirty pounds in purchasing and procuring the freedom of the city, hath sometimes been denied the privilege of a free citizen, merely because he could not in conscience comply with the ordinary custom of swearing by the Book, apprehending it to be unwarrantable and sinful. Is it becoming for professors of Christianity thus to offend their weak brethren, impose upon their consciences, and sin against Christ?

Was the Book-oath ever so lawful in itself, unless a man be persuaded in his own mind that it is so, he cannot swear it lawfully. If he that eateth and doubteth is damned, he that sweareth and doubteth must be no less so. Should it be allowed that the method of swearing by touching and kissing the Gospels is innocent, which we have proved it is not ; yet it cannot be alledged that it is necessary, since there is another mode of swearing, abundantly more decent and solemn, namely, by lifting up the right-hand that the Scripture directs to *, and which no one ever pretended, nor indeed can have the least reason to scruple at. Why then should the consciences of serious people, good subjects, and useful members of civil society, be burdened with this unnecessary thing, which, whatever it is in itself, all must own, may be omitted, or dispensed with at least, without sin, or the smallest detriment either to the church or commonwealth?

But should it, upon examination, be

* The usual form of administering an oath in North Britain, agreeable to Scripture-precedents, is as follows: The person called to swear lifts up his right-hand toward heaven, and the judge, magistrate, or clerk, empowered to dispense the oath, addresses him in these or the like words ; " As you shall answer to God, and by God himself, you declare that you will tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, in this matter."

found that it is really unwarrantable, and a corruption of one very solemn part of religious worship ; to deprive men of their just rights, and deny them the common privilege of subjects and citizens, because their consciences will not permit them to comply with it, is a method of proceeding for which it will be difficult to make any reasonable apology.

Shall good Christians and loyal subjects be oppressed, and undergo a kind of persecution in a Protestant country, merely for declining the observation of an unscriptural, superstitious, Popish, Heathenish, ceremony? I call it unscriptural ; because there is not the least mention made of swearing by a book, or kissing it, from the one end of the Bible to the other. I call it superstitious ; because God hath no where commanded it ; nor is it authorised by any Scripture-example : on the contrary, it is, with other human inventions, and every species of will-worship, expressly prohibited, *Deut. v. 32. Isa. xxix. 13. Matt. xv. 9.* Popish it most certainly is, because it was borrowed from Rome, and authorised by the Pope. Heathenish I call it ; because kissing was a species of worship which the ancient Pagans frequently performed to their idols and fictitious deities, as *Alexander ab Alexandro* and others inform us. Would

it not therefore be abundantly more for the honour of a city that hath been so long justly renowned for a steady attachment to the Protestant interest, and the cause of liberty ; its common council, rulers, and magistrates, unimously to supplicate the higher powers for liberty to discontinue the practice of such an unnecessary and hurtful ceremony, than to make it the condition of enjoying the privileges of a free citizen among them ?

The opinion concerning the unwarrantableness of the Book-oath, that we have endeavoured to establish in the foregoing Letter, is not singular, or, as may probably be thought by some, peculiar to a few whimsical persons, but conformable to the sentiments of some of the most famous Protestant divines and churches in Europe. In a national synod of the French Protestant Church held at Gap, in the year 1603, in which the great Chamier presided, some having moved the following question, “ Whether an oath might be lawfully taken before a magistrate by laying the hands on and kissing the Bible ? ” The Synod determined it in the negative ; and gave it as their judgment, that the ceremony above-mentioned, being what might prove of dangerous consequence, ought not to be used ; but that those who

are called to swear, should content themselves with the bare lifting up of their hands*.

What have been the sentiments of the Church of Scotland in relation to this point, and the constant practice of her members from the time of the Reformation to this very day, is well known; and some famous English divines have condemned swearing by the Book in very strong terms.

To make it a question, whether this unscriptural, Popish rite should be rejected, or still retained and practised, is in effect to question whether Christ or Antichrist shall reign, and give laws to the Church; and to determine for the observation of it, and after it has been clearly shewn to be, with all other will-worship, expressly prohibited by the great Head of the Church, would be plainly to give Antichrist the preference. Should any object that the method of swearing complained of hath seldom been scrupled at by Christians of any denomination in England, and therefore cannot be thought to be such an evil thing as has been represented: We answer, the reason is obvious. Many have never set themselves carefully to examine the matter. They have rather

* Quick's Synodicon, vol. I. p. 239.

taken it for granted that the custom is innocent, or been willing to have it reputed such, than been really convinced in their consciences from the Word of God that it is laudable, or warrantable. Custom, the example of others, love of ease, and a regard to their own interest, have so blinded the eyes of others, that they cannot see any evil in it. And that the minds of persons, otherwise very well disposed, may in this manner be darkened with regard to some things of no small importance, is abundantly evident both from Scripture and experience.

But, whatever fallible men may think or do, if we are disposed to take the Word of God for our only rule to direct us in the matters of his worship and consult it accordingly, we shall soon be convinced, that the usual mode of swearing in England by *laying the hand upon and kissing the Gospels*, is unwarrantable and superstitious, and in fact a species of idolatry. It is an exotic plant that the heavenly Father never planted; one of those tares that the enemy is wont to sow in the field of the Christian Church while men sleep: it is high time then to root it up. *Amen.*